

Session V
Closure of Ecostandards Workgroup and EPA's Response to Recommendations
PPDC Meeting – July 21, 1999

Background

- ! May 14, 1997, the Ecological Standards Program Workgroup was formed to review, evaluate, and advise the PPDC on ways to improve OPP's ecological risk assessment and management processes, models, and tools.
- ! The workgroup evaluated a series of case studies and developed and presented a report and recommendations to the full PPDC in May 1998.
- ! In January 1999, the PPDC agreed to a closure process and on February 2, 1999 OPP sent out to the full PPDC the final report and recommendations with a request for concurrence or non-concurrence by February 25, 1999.
- ! OPP received 3 concurrences w/ minor comments.

Summary of Recommendations and OPP's Responses

1. OPP decision documents should contain sufficient information so that the public can understand the rationale for the environmental risk management decision.

OPP agrees that the public should be able to pick up a pesticide decision document and read not only what OPP decided but also the basis for the decision and the rationale.

2. OPP should make pesticide decision documents and supporting analyses more understandable and more readily available to the general public.

The pilot OP process marks a dramatic change in OPP operations along these lines, as does the recent release of OPP's risk assessment for Chlorfenapyr on the Internet. OPP agrees that there is value in making its documents more readable and accessible and in having public technical briefings for each of the OPs (as this improves public access and knowledge about what OPP is doing and why). As we gain more experience with the OP pilot process, OPP will evaluate both the costs and benefits and make decisions on institutionalizing these changes.

3. OPP needs to better understand ecosystem-level impacts and better understand the impact of pesticide use on plant and animal diversity, predator-prey relations, and the stability of ecosystems in the face of other stressors. More monitoring data is needed.

New and additional data, methods and tools are needed in order to achieve improved understanding of these impacts. OPP agrees in principle that it should seek to improve its assessment methods along these lines and to develop improved methods and tools. The first step is to fully define from a scientific standpoint what data are needed in order to understand these impacts and to put in place these new data requirements.

4. Better understanding the severity and magnitude of ecological risks posed by pesticide use is important and the ECOFRAM initiative to develop more advanced risk assessment methods and tools is therefore important. However, OPP needs to consider additional mechanisms such as task forces and partnerships to address some of the newly identified research needs.

OPP agrees that it is important for risk managers to better understand the severity and magnitude of ecological impacts posed by pesticide use. Simple screening level risk assessment methods fall short of providing the risk manager with the fuller understanding he or she typically seeks when making tough risk management choices. OPP must look for additional ways to get the vital methods and tool development work done and agrees with the recommendation to seek partners.

5. OPP needs to consider the potential adverse impacts to other commercial industries and beneficial non-target species, such as negative impacts on fisheries or beneficial insects used in pollination and should factor these impacts into pesticide environmental decision-making.

OPP agrees in principle that it should seek to improve its assessment methods along these lines. The first step is to fully define from a scientific standpoint what data are needed in order to understand these impacts and to put in place these new data requirements.